DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 261 754 JC 850 549

TITLE	Assessing Student Degree Aspirations. ERIC Digest.
INSTITUTION	ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges, Los Angeles, Calif.
SPONS AGENCY	National Inst. of Education (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	Aug 85
CONTRACT	400-83-0030
NOTE	5p.; For the full study report, see ED 255 250.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Information Analyses - ERIC Information Analysis Products (071)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Academic Aspiration; *College Transfer Students; Community Colleges; School Surveys; *Student Attitudes; *Student Educational Objectives; Two Year Colleges; *Two Year College Students; Urban Schools

ABSTRACT

In spring 1984, a study was conducted by the Center for the Study of Community Colleges to examine various facets of transfer education at urban community colleges. Part of the study focused on the large discrepancy between the number of community college students saying they wanted to earn a bachelor's degree and the actual number who attained the baccalaureate. A survey of students in randomly selected transfer-credit course sections at 22 urban community colleges yielded 1,163 usable responses. Study findings included the following: (1) 74% of the students planned to attain a baccalaureate degree or higher, yet only 54% indicated transfer as their primary reason for attending college; (2) 44% expressed strong feelings about the relative importance of transfer; (3) only 12% could be classified as exhibiting behavior highly indicative of transfer, and most had not taken the initiative in planning for transfer; and (4) students with high transfer attitudes and behaviors were concentrated among those who had completed 45 to 59 units, were attending full-time, and were of traditional college age. The study findings suggested that community colleges concerned with the identification of potential transfer students should collect other data besides planned degree attainment. (LAL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED261754

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ASSESSING STUDENT DEGREE ASPIRATIONS

Educational Resources Information Center
ERIC DIGEST
University of California, Los Angeles

August 1985

JC 850 549

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☒ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
A. M. Cohen

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Educational Resources Information Center
ERIC DIGEST
University of California, Los Angeles

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

August 1985

ASSESSING STUDENT DEGREE ASPIRATIONS

Why the large discrepancy between the number of community college students who say they want to earn a bachelor's degree and the actual number who attain the baccalaureate? A recent survey of students at 22 urban community colleges indicates that part of the answer to this question lies in the inadequacy of self-reported degree aspirations. This ERIC Digest reviews the methodology and findings of the survey and discusses implications.

ASSESSING STUDENT DEGREE ASPIRATION AND TRANSFER DISPOSITION

During Spring 1984, the Center for the Study of Community Colleges surveyed the students in randomly selected course sections at 22 community colleges participating in the Ford Foundation's Urban Community Colleges Transfer Opportunities Program. The course sections involved in the survey were identified as eligible for transfer credit to a four-year college. 1,613 usable responses were received.

Among other items, the survey instrument solicited information on (1) the highest degree that students plan to attain, (2) their primary reasons for attending college, (3) student attitudes (i.e., predisposition) toward transfer; and (4) student transfer behaviors (i.e., the actions taken by students to prepare for successful transfer). Findings, discussed below, reveal that while a large percentage of students said they planned to attain a baccalaureate, smaller proportions demonstrated the attitudes and behaviors that are indicative of transfer success.

WHAT ARE STUDENT DEGREE ASPIRATIONS AND WHY ARE STUDENTS ENROLLED?

Of the respondents, 74 percent indicated that they planned to attain a baccalaureate or higher degree. When asked to indicate their primary reason for attending college, however, only 54 percent indicated transfer to a four-year college or university. Many (31.9 percent) were attending primarily to gain occupational skills; 8.3 percent indicated occupational advancement; and 6.6 percent indicated personal interest. Age, attendance status, sex, and number of credits completed were found to be significantly related to student

The Clearinghouse operates under NIE Contract No. 400-83-0030. The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of NIE and no official endorsement by NIE should be inferred.

goals. Preparing for transfer was more likely to be given as a reason for attending college by full-time male students who were of traditional college age.

WHAT IS THE PREDISPOSITION OF STUDENTS TOWARD TRANSFER?

The survey instrument included five Likert-type items which asked the student about the relative importance of transfer:

(1) Transferring to a four-year college is not that important to me. (Desired response: strong disagreement or disagreement).

(2) Transferring to a four-year college is too far off in the future to worry about it now. (Desired response: strong disagreement or disagreement).

(3) If I don't transfer to a four-year college, I will feel disappointed. (Desired response: strong agreement or agreement).

(4) Transfer courses are not very useful because you don't learn any practical skills. (Desired response: strong disagreement or disagreement).

(5) For me, getting a job is more important than transferring to a four-year college. (Desired response: strong disagreement or disagreement).

Of the students included in the analysis, 44 percent fell into what could be termed the "high transfer attitude" category, significantly lower than the 54 percent who indicated that their primary reason for attending was transfer to a four-year college.

DO STUDENTS PREPARE FOR SUCCESSFUL TRANSFER?

The survey instrument also assessed student actions in preparation for transfer:

(1) Transfer Knowledge: a composite of three items that asked the student to indicate the sources used to determine transferability of courses taken in the community college. The three possible sources of information were: (1) catalog/course schedule; (b) counselors; (c) making inquiries of a four-year college.

(2) Course Transferability: Students were asked to list the courses they enrolled in during Spring 1984 and to indicate for each whether they knew if the course was transferable. This item was scored on the basis of the number of courses listed. For instance, if a student was taking four courses and s/he knew the transfer eligibility for all four, his or her score would be a four.

(3) Transfer Planning: A composite of four items which asked students

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

who planned on transferring if they had (a) requested catalogs and application forms from colleges and universities; (b) asked counselors for information about colleges' requirements for transfer applicants; (c) visited the colleges; and (d) completed and submitted transfer applications.

(4) Transfer Information: An item which asked students whether they had sought information on transfer opportunities from the counseling office frequently, occasionally, or rarely.

Findings on this part of the survey were surprising: only 12 of the responding students could be classified as exhibiting high transfer behaviors. The majority of students were not taking the initiative in planning their eventual transfer. There is an obvious need, therefore, to inform students of transfer requirements and the steps that need to be taken in securing entrance into a four-year institution.

WHICH STUDENTS WERE MOST LIKELY TO DISPLAY HIGH TRANSFER ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS?

The students who fell into the high transfer attitudes and high transfer behavior categories clearly show the highest predisposition to transfer. An analysis of characteristics of these students indicates that number of credits earned, attendance status, and age appear to be related to changes in transfer attitudes and behaviors. Students with high transfer attitudes and behaviors are concentrated among those who have completed 45 to 59 units, who are attending full-time, and who are of traditional college age. Significantly, of those students who indicated that they wanted to attain a Bachelor's degree or a graduate degree, only 48.4 percent and 69.2 percent (respectively) demonstrated high transfer attitudes; only 12.8 percent 22.7 percent demonstrated high transfer behaviors.

IMPLICATIONS

As the above findings indicate, the self-reported degree aspirations of community college students may not always be good discriminators of transfer potential. Though students may say they plan on earning a B.A. or a higher degree, many give reasons other than transfer for having enrolled in college. Also, many baccalaureate aspirants do not demonstrate attitudes and behaviros helpful to transfer success. Consequently, community colleges concerned with the identification of potential transfer students at the point of entry need to collect other data besides planned degree attainment.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

The full study report should be consulted for further information on the survey:

Cohen, A.M., Brawer, F.B., and Bensimon, E.M. Transfer Education in American Community Colleges. Los Angeles, CA: Center for the Study of Community Colleges, 1985. (ED 255 250)

ERIC CLEARINGHOUSE FOR JUNIOR COLLEGES
NOV 22 1985